
BRAD COLBY WEDLOCK, Ed.D., IN MEMORIAM

Tributes

*Colleagues from
the University of Louisiana at Lafayette*

Mitzi's Thoughts

For me, the best way to describe Brad is that he was an old soul! Being an old soul refers to how you view and approach life. Indeed, there were many conversations where we both acknowledged how he approached everything as an old soul. He was always a joy to talk with, whether we were pontificating about academics, statistics, travel, life experiences, his future plans, and/or balancing it all. Those that knew him well would agree that he could put out a tremendous amount of work. For sure this was true, but more so I could always tell he was driven by quality rather than quantity. As an old soul, he knew in his heart – and simply his way of being – that the key to success was to keep clam and carry on. If I were to capture his essence, I would say he approached all aspects of life by stopping, waiting, listening, then and only then taking the next steps. Now granted, this was often a split second turnaround but that was what made him a natural. His life views and wisdom generally mirrored that of someone well beyond his years.

As his doctoral chair and in terms of academics, I loved how he was always willing to try new things; he understood the importance of going word for word over every single survey item; he wholeheartedly agreed to co-present and co-write; and he wanted to do everything under the sun with his dissertation research. In fact, at one point I did rein him back which he didn't really like but it became an inside joke with many. Hey, most doctoral chairs will tell students, a good dissertation is a finished one! But seriously, here again, he was the ideal student!

On a personal note, many of his peers to this day talk about how they, without hesitation, trusted his judgement and advice. Brad truly loved meeting new people and enjoyed listening to new perspectives. I never heard one negative word from Brad about the amount of work he did, commitment to family and friends, or the demands of a doctorate. There was also a deeply spiritual side to Brad. He was confident and he was the type of person who would rather get things done than sit around stressing the small stuff. All of these things together made Brad who he was and how he was able to juggle so much.

Simply, Brad genuinely cared for others and would truly give you the shirt off his back. He loved learning, music, and experiencing all he could! He was destined for greatness and taken much too soon from all of us. Dr. Brad C. Wedlock, you will always have a place in my heart and memory!

With respect and warmest regards, it was a true pleasure knowing you.

Dr. Mitzi Trahan, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Donna's Tribute

Brad provided so much joy and inspiration to many persons in my immediate circle. When he first shared with me his desire to work on becoming a teacher of children with and without special learning needs before he assumed any type of educational leadership position, my response was that is great goal but that will take so much more work. He was already pursuing his doctorate. I quickly learned how committed he was to reaching those goals. In his special education classes, he displayed a special passion, commitment to practice love, tolerance of diversity, and patience. Brad's commitment to caring and supporting others to succeed included not only children and his peers but faculty, too. His enthusiasm was an inspiration to his peers and faculty alike. His spirit continues to impact many lives.

Dr. Donna Wadsworth, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Ashley's Sentiments

Upon the reflection of my dear friend, Brad C. Wedlock's life, one thing stood out and always would shine bright like a diamond - his love for anyone he met. It didn't matter if you were his friend, relative, coworker or colleague... he was so whole-heartedly interested in what you were pursuing, whether it was personally or academically. The respect and genuine interest and effort he showed in everything he took part in was the best definition of his character.

If one was lucky enough, they had the privilege to spend time with Brad outside of his academic studies. A witty, imaginative, and so-caring human being he was. Our world lost a great soul when he departed it on that warm and sunny April afternoon. The sun shines a little dimmer without Brad here, but yet seems to shine almost brighter with the legacy he left behind. Lucky doesn't begin to describe how we felt to have him so ever-present in our lives.

Until we meet again, my sweet friend.

Ashley R. Veillon, MAT, Martial F. Billeaud Elementary (Broussard, LA)

Martha's Reflections

Brad was a colleague and friend. I would characterize him as a person who loved life, loved people, loved learning and loved sharing his love of learning with others. He was a genuine teacher at heart. The world was Brad's classroom and we, his friends and colleagues, were his students. He was always willing to share with me a scholarly article or information on a statistical method that might work best for our study. He spoke often about bootstrapping; he was devastated when Dr. Trahan would not allow him to conduct bootstrapping for his study! We spoke often about our research in the field of technology. Brad and I discussed how we hoped that our research could assist other educators in building a bridge for the future of online learning.

Brad had many positive, impactful leadership qualities. I would describe one of his greatest leadership traits as servant leader. A servant leader can best be described as a person who focuses on the well-being and growth of others. They put people's need first above their own. They help to develop their community to perform at its best. If we consider ourselves as Brad's community, he was always seeking to assist us in achieving our best. Brad was always willing to help me; to put my needs first above his own. It always amazed me how he would arrive during my greatest time of need. He had impeccable timing! I could always count on him to have information on the constructs for our study, to create our presentation slides or to find a Mac adapter! Yes, he was a Mac lover; just like me! I still miss our talks, our excitement about research and most importantly his beautiful gentle nature and smile.

I seek to live a little like Brad would have lived each day.

Dr. Martha Bryant, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Maggi's Thoughts

Brad's reputation preceded him. I met him briefly more than once through a few of our friends. His name came up often as a guy you just had to know. I didn't know what to make of him...he seemed almost too nice to be genuine. When he showed up in my master's level teaching classes, I was surprised. Wasn't he a doc student? How many hours does this guy take? What was he trying to prove? I had no idea that his infectious energy would derail my career down a path I could not have imagined.

Gradually I got to know him and enjoyed sharing classes with him. He was a great guy with whom to discuss ideas - with just enough competitiveness to push me to do better. He was always talking about conferences and articles in the works. When he presented at a conference in Hawaii, I made a comment that he was "living the life." That may have been the first time he told me that I could do it, too. Nah, I couldn't stand up and pretend I was an expert in a room full of actual experts. He laughed it off and said that half of them felt like they were pretending too. Start small, find the supportive audiences, but just get up and try it. I would have nothing to lose.

When he and Linda (Fairchild) published their TCR article together, I was with them to celebrate. He looked at me and said, "Ok, you're next." I left that conversation deciding to look into continuing on to my doctorate after I completed my master's degree. I would never have believed I could before, but there was something about Brad that

made everyone think that if he believed in you, you had to believe in yourself. I would soon see, at his memorial, how many people had been inspired by him along the way. He was everyone's cheerleader.

Today I find myself a year into the Educational Leadership doctoral program, his program. I am sitting next to the cubicle where he worked, a graduate assistant like he was. I swear I can feel him on the other side of the wall. I can still hear his words of encouragement and I hear his teasing laughter when I start to doubt myself. We all have to be successful, especially now, because he believed in us. With every word we write, with every presentation we give, he lives on in us.

A spirit like that doesn't fade away easily, nor will we let it.

Maggi Bienvenu, MAT, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Linda's Memories

I first met Brad Wedlock in the first class for my doctoral degree. We had a mutual friend, so I ended up talking to him that class. Brad and I hit it off because we both were a little competitive when it came to our grades. We continued to take a few classes together, but he was much further along than I was. The more I learned about Brad, the more I wanted to be his friend. Brad pushed me to be just a little bit better each time. Whenever I had a question or a problem, he'd just break it down because he'd been there before. Brad wanted everyone to shine; he wanted everyone to succeed. One day I was complaining to Brad (he often let me do that) about a new policy becoming popular in K-12 education. He told me to stop complaining and to write about it, so we did. What I didn't realize is that Brad would have written four pages by the time I even got off of work. That's the type of person Brad was. He had a plan and stuck to it, usually beating everyone else to the punch. He called me later that night and we finalized our submission to TCR. He put me as first author, and I told him, "No, you need to be it; you worked harder." And he said that he wanted it to be my first "first" publication. Later, that stuck with me.

The more I got to know Brad and hung out with him outside of class, the more my other friends gravitated towards him, too. He was always so busy, but he made time for everyone. Perhaps my favorite memory of Brad and me was when we were studying to take the test to become certified in special education. Brad was not only close to finishing his doctorate in education, but also a master's degree to be certified to teach elementary special education. I like tests, so we both thought it would be fun to take the test as a challenge. We went all out. We made flash cards and study groups and exam guides. We met almost every day to see who could list the IDEA categories the fastest.

One day, we were studying at a local coffee shop, and I was scrolling through social media. I saw the famous Oscar Mayer Wienermobile would be in Lafayette. I immediately got off-task and wanted to go. I expected Brad to say "Linda, we need to study. The test is soon." Instead, we both packed up and went to see the famous vehicle. Brad laughed the entire time. He was fascinated by the van, the job, the perks. It's one of the times I think of when I miss him, and I hope you can remember him this way, too.

Dr. Linda Fairchild, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Marquia's Reflection

Music is the aspect of life that can bring two totally different people together, regardless of their cultural background, race, or gender. It is something that can be used as a conversation starter or a relationship builder. For us, it was both. Besides education, music was the thing that Brad and I shared. I already thought Brad was a pretty cool dude. Once we started discussing music, and he told me that he was a DJ, I knew we would be friends! I recall talking about some of my favorite rap artists and old school songs. Guess what? Brad knew each one. We would discuss all genres, no matter the artist. We found that to be our common theme. Yes, education was our thing, also. Music... music was our vibe! I like to believe he was pretty fond of me, also. We had plenty of inside jokes. He just reminded me of one of the guys I grew up with. I smile as I think about the memories we shared, including him bringing a plate of fried fish to the lunch table one day. As I smile, I also continue to grieve.

The day that I heard about the accident was actually the day before my final dissertation defense. I did not tell him about it because I wanted to surprise him the next morning at work, as we were both Graduate Assistants. When I defended the other parts, he said, "I didn't expect anything less from you." The night of his death, I started

getting texts from classmates asking if I was ok. I didn't understand why they kept asking that. Then, I heard the news. It hit me. I didn't know if I wanted to just sit and cry or continue practicing. He just e-mailed us earlier that day. I had to think about Brad! It's like he whispered in my ear: "Kia, you already know what to do! Don't let me down." I kept pushing! The next day I successfully defended my dissertation. I cried at the end, not just because I was done and this was a huge accomplishment, but also because I was finally able to release the emotions that were bottled inside from the day before. Brad even placed a new friend in my life, Linda. Our first encounter was a hug the morning after his death, the morning of my dissertation. I did not know her, she did not know me. I did know that she needed a hug as she stood in tears. To this day, she is still in my life.

It was hard to face reality. Honestly, it didn't hit me until I walked into our area and his cubicle only consisted of his thinking and planning boards. It didn't hit me until I couldn't call out his name from around the corner, making jokes about small things. It didn't hit me until I was viewing him the day of his funeral. I cried, but I did not want Brad to call me "soft" (lol), so I continued to remember him in the same essence the day before the accident. To this day, he is still my inspiration. As I continue to flourish in my career in higher education, reaching those underrepresented students, I think about his philosophy and so much he would have become. Yet, he lived a life that many people double his age never have and will never see. Brad may not be here physically, but please know that he lives through many of us! He has taught me to live life without any regrets. Take trips. Present at conferences. Start businesses. Research new information. Write articles. Talk to everyone. Above all, just listen to music and let it soothe my soul.

We love you, Brad!

Dr. Marquia Whitehead, University of Louisiana at Lafayette